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NSC BRIEFING

CHINESE COMMUNIST COMMUNES

- I. The recent Chinese Communist central committee plenum--at which Mao Tse-tung resigned from largely ceremonial job as head of state--issued the Chinese regime's first authoritative policy statement on communes since the movement gained momentum.
 - A. Resolution "on the basis of a proposal submitted by Mao" does not ~~change~~ change any fundamental aspect of commune program.
 - B. However, experience gained in past few months has led regime to soften some of more objectionable features of the new system.
 1. In reproving officials for carrying system too far, central committee called them "dizzy with success," a phrase used by Stalin under similar circumstances at close of Soviet collectivization drive in 1931.
- II. Resolution gives assurances on points which we know from letters coming out of the mainland have most worried the Chinese.
 - A. Families are to be permitted live together in new communal housing and parents must be permitted decide whether children stay at home or at new communal schools.
 1. However, reaffirms party intention obliterate the "old patriarchal society."
 - B. Houses, bedding, furniture, clothing, bank deposits and funds remitted from abroad or from within China are still to be regarded as private property.
 - C. Resolution says time not yet ripe for China to shift completely from payment in wages to a system of "free supply."

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- D. Insists food in messes be "tasty and nutritious;" but difficult square this insistence with another that cooks must be chosen from the "politically reliable."
- E. Recognizes need for adequate rest in passage stating that worker has right to "eight hours for sleep, four hours for meals and recreation" every day.

III. Earlier indications of difficulties in urban communalization confirmed by resolution's admission that cities--where "bourgeois ideology still prevalent"--far more "complex" than country.

- A. Says except for experimental work, establishment of communes on a large scale in big cities should be postponed until the "skeptics and doubters" have had chance to overcome misgivings.

- 1. Insists, however, on party's determination ultimately to establish urban communes.

IV. Some speculation--notably in Taipei--has linked this decree to Mao's resignation as a sign of decline in his political power. My experts find little evidence for this, but I'm not so sure. The Chinese society's collision with Communism is a very complex matter and we know less about it than we should like to. Manipulation of human lives on this scale is dangerous business. Would not want to say that heads will not eventually roll at top as well as at bottom.